

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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47

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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P O 161814Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2450

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2703

EXDIS

JERUSALEM FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, XF, IS, FR, RO

SUBJECT: AN OFFICIAL ISRAELI ACCOUNT OF MAALOT TRAGEDY

1. MFA DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL EVRON TOLD US TODAY THAT DEMANDS OF FEDAYEEN WHO SEIZED MAALOT SCHOOL YESTERDAY AND OF THEIR HEADQUARTERS ABROAD WERE SO VAGUE INITIALLY AND BECAME SO UNREASONABLE IN AFTERNOON THAT GOI, WHEN FEDAYEEN RESOLUTELY REJECTED ALL PLEASE FO DEADLINE EXTENSION, COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THERE HAD BEEN NO GENUINE FEDAYEEN INTENTION FROM OUTSET TO EFFECT EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS FOR CHILDREN.

2. EVRON, WHO SAID HIS ACCOUNT WAS BASED ON GOS GUR'S BRIEFING OF CABINET LAST EVENING, STATED: (A) ROMANIANS TOLD ISRAELIS BEFORE 11 AM THAT IF GOI GAVE ASSURANCE PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED AND EXPLAINED HOW THEY WOULD BE TRANSPORTED TO SYRIA, ROMANIA WOULD GET CODEWORD FROM PDFLP. ISRAELIS COMPLIED.

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(B) ONLY AT 11 AM DID ISRAELIS RECEIVE NAMES FROM FEDAYEEN IN

SCHOOLHOUSE OF THOSE PERSONS WHOSE RELEASE WAS DEMANDED. FIRST TWO PERSONS ON LIST WERE TO SELECT ADDITIONAL PRISONERS TO BE ADDED TO LIST. HOWEVER, SECOND PERSON HAD DIED IN 1972 SABENA HIJACKING, AND WHEN ISRAELIS ASKED THIRD PRISONER ON LIST TO MAKE SELECTIONS, HE HAD TROUBLE MAKING UP HIS MIND. ALSO, THERE WERE DUPLICATIONS IN HIS AND FIRST PERSON'S SELECTIONS WHICH HAD TO BE SORTED OUT. (C) IN ADDITION TO TIME THUS LOST IN COMPILING LIST, ISRAELIS HAD TROUBLE LOCATING THESE INDIVIDUALS AND FOUND THEY WERE IN PRISONS SCATTERED ALL OVER ISRAEL.

3. EVRON CONTINUED THAT ONLY IN EARLY AFTERNOON DID FRENCH AMB FINALLY RECEIVE AUTHORIZATION FROM JOBERT TO SERVE AS INTERMEDIARY (BUT WITH INSTRUCTION TO AVOID BECOMING HOSTAGE). AMB WAITED ANXIOUSLY IN FRENCH CONSULATE AT HAIFA TO RECEIVE CODEWORD FROM PARIS BUT THEN AGREED TO ISRAELI REQUEST TO COME TO MAALOT. WHEN ISRAELIS TOLD FEDAYEEN IN SCHOOLHOUSE THAT HE HAD ARRIVED, THEY REFUSED TO DEAL WITH HIM IN ABSENCE OF CODEWORD AND WARNED THEY WOULD SHOOT AT ANYONE CLAIMING TO AMB BUT LACKING CODEWORD.

4. EVRON SAID THAT ONLY ABOUT FIVE PM DID ROMANIAN AMB RECEIVE PDFLP TERMS FROM BUCHAREST. FOR FIRST TIME, ISRAELIS WERE INFORMED THAT PDFLP WOULD MAKE CODEWORD AVAILABLE ONLY AFTER PRISONERS HAD LANDED IN SYRIA. TERMS ALSO WERE ESCALATED WITH DEMAND THAT CHILDREN ALSO BE TAKEN TO SYRIA. SINCE TIME WAS NEEDED TO PREPARE UN AIRCRAFT FOR PRISONERS, ISRAELIS PLEADED WITH FEDAYEEN IN SCHOOLHOUSE FOR DEADLINE EXTENSION BUT WERE RESOLUTELY REBUFFED. (THIS WAS BORNE OUT BY ISRAELI RADIO INTERVIEW TODAY WITH ONE OF SURVIVING CHILDREN, WHO SAID FEDAYEEN INSIDE SCHOOLHOUSE TOLD CHILDREN THAT DEADLINE POSTPONEMENT UTTERLY OUT OF QUESTION.) CABINET THUS HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN TRYING TO RESCUE SOME OF CHILDREN OR RISK EXPLOSION KILLING ALL.

5. EVRON HAD NOT READ FRENCH AMB'S INTERVIEW WITH TODAY'S AFTERNOON ISRAELI PAPERS (JERUSALEM 908 NOTAL) QUESTIONING GOI VERSION OF EVENTS, AND OFFERED NO COMMENT. HE CONFIRMED NEWS REPORT THAT EBAN WAS MEETING WITH FRENCH AMB TONIGHT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARAMILITARY FORCES, SCHOOLS, POLITICAL PRISONERS, POLITICAL SITUATION, AMBASSADORS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TELAV02703
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740121-0444
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740541/aaaabkab.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <21 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AN OFFICIAL ISRAELI ACCOUNT OF MAALOT TRAGEDY
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, XF, IS, FR, RO, FEDAYEEN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005